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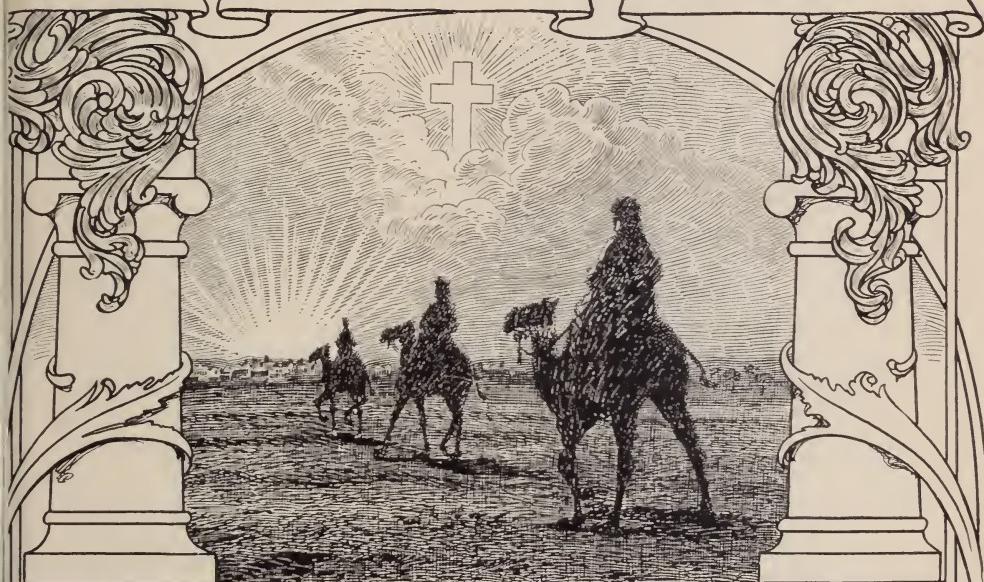
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THE LOCAL SENS

Neglected Arabia

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The Arabian Mission



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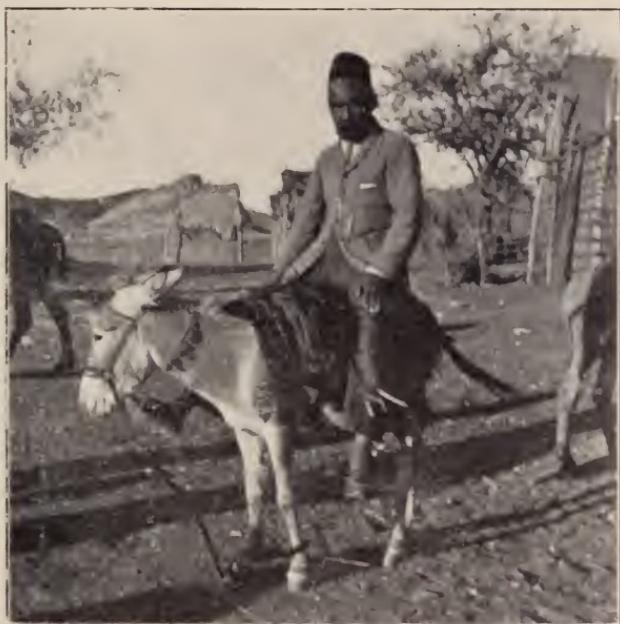
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IBRAHIM.

A LATTER DAY SAINT IN OMAN—NOT A MORMON.

REV. JAMES CANTINE.

The experiences of our colporteurs are always interesting reading to us here on the field, illustrating, as they do, the spirit of our helpers, their methods, and the success attending this branch of our native agency. Extracts from a recent report of Ibrahim may likewise interest the readers of NEGLECTED ARABIA. The murder of the chief



IBRAHIM.

fighting man of the Sultan at Muscat has thrown the whole country into an uproar for months, and the tour Ibrahim describes is the first made this year. On his trip he took his son Abd el Ahad with him as a helper, and, sending a box of books on ahead up the coast by sailing boat, the two left Muscat on donkeys the last of May. A good deal of his report is simply "arrived at such a place, sold so many books, and left for the next village": with the frequent remark "and had a good talk," meaning conversation about the Bible.

After having been away from Muscat about ten days, he arrives one evening at a place called Usheel, and says: "We went to the lodging place of the sheikh, but when we arrived the people of the village did not desire us, and their faces were venomous towards us, but I recognized one of the men sitting about as a former friend of mine, and when I saw him I felt that the Lord had sent before us to prepare the way for His word, and this man talked with them and persuaded them to receive us unto themselves. And when, by command of the sheikh, we sat down, there sat down by my side a learned man, esteemed, very holy in Oman, and he said to me, 'because you do not fast and do not pray you are accounted by us vile and unbelievers.' I said, 'Have you a lantern, O friend, that I can make proof of your contention?' He said, 'Bring him a light,' and when they had brought, I said, 'You know the verse from the Quran which says that if the people of the book were steadfast in the Law and Gospel God would cover their offences,' and taking from the saddle bags a Gospel and a Quran, I said, 'Let each one, O friend, speak according to his book in the ears of those that hear.' And there were near by nearly fifty men, not counting the women and the children on the roof. And I took the sixth chapter of Matthew from the beginning to the end, and said, 'this is the teaching of our Lord Jesus, the son of Mary, and we walk by it and are judged by it as your own prophet Mohammied says.' And we talked together until the fifth hour of the night. And when, on separating for the night, we besought permission to resume our journey early in the morning, they desired us to remain until noon, which we did, selling ten Scriptures."

These religious teachers are the bane of our life in Oman, but also the means through which we often gain access to the people, who generally are quite ignorant on points of religious controversy, accepting without much question whatever is told them by these same Mullahs.

Here is another experience of Ibrahim's with this same class: "We were sitting under a tree at evening time with many of the people around us, none of us saying a word, when I saw approaching a Mullah. All the people said among themselves, 'The Mullah has come'; 'the Mullah has come.' When he arrived, he at once asked me with severity, 'What books are these?' I said, 'Books for the wise and books for the foolish, for the rich and for the poor, books large and small, all kinds of books.' He said, 'I want the Quran, the exalted.' I showed him a Quran and a Bible. Of the latter he said, 'Of this I know nothing.' I replied that in it I could show him something that he would like. But he and all the people began speaking against me and against the Bible very foolishly. I kept quiet and did not say

anything, until at last their words burned within me like fire, and I said, 'I am not afraid, O ye that are present, not of the rulers and not of the Mullahs, and do not think that I am a stranger among you, for the truth is greater than all of you, and the Word of God is stronger than all.' And I said, 'See, O my friends, what this book which has descended upon the tongue of Solomon says about wisdom,' and I read to them until the Mullah said, 'This book is useful, I will buy it.' Then I took out the Book of Psalms, and said to him, 'This is the book of the prophet David, to which the Quran testifies.' And the Mullah said, 'This also is a good book.' And I likewise took out portion after portion until I had sold him five books, and when the people saw that the Mullah had bought they also took from me twenty-seven books, and I rejoiced greatly."

The boldness of Ibrahim is sometimes rather startling to those who travel with him, but he generally succeeds in either disarming opposition or putting it to flight. Here is another experience of his. We had been touring in the towns inland until all of his books were finished, when he went to the place to which he had sent the box of books by sea, a town called Khabura, with rather a bad reputation among our workers. He writes, "We opened the box, and, taking some books, went to the bazaar. There gathered around us a number of men to annoy us and prevent our selling, but God made their purpose vain, for as they troubled us we kept on selling until we had sold forty, when we went with our books to the house of a man who was friendly. And when they saw this a number of men came upon us, and with them a Mullah with a *miswad* (a stick for cleaning the teeth) in his hand. I knew this man, and when I saw him I said, 'O Lord, preserve us from the cunning of this man and his violence.' And they filled the house around us and began to revile, and say, 'Why do you bring books not permitted and books of unbelievers?' I said, 'O friend, the *miswad* in your hand cannot purify your mouth from vileness, nor will your white turban separate you from others, but will testify against you on the day of judgment, if you do not believe the words of the prophets.' He replied, 'I believe in Mohammed, upon whom be peace!' I said, 'And does not your prophet commend this book?' And he took from me the book of Job and said, 'See, I read here that it says that Jesus, the son of Mary, is the Son of God.' I replied, 'O slanderer, that book does not have the name of Jesus in it,' and I proved to the people that he was trying to deceive them. Then the owner of the house rebuked him, and in a rage he arose and left, after which I sold ten more books."

But all the religious teachers are not so impervious to the truth. At one place he writes: "An aged Mullah came and asked me, saying,

'How do you say that Jesus is the Son of God?' and I took the first chapter of John and explained to him, with many men standing about listening to every word. At last I said, 'Do you now believe that Jesus is the Son of God?' and he replied, 'I believe and am persuaded,' and this before all those standing about."

At the end Ibrahim sums up his report by saying: "We were twenty-five days on the road and sold four hundred and fifty Scriptures. We visited seventy-one towns and villages, and sold books in all of them but twelve. Of these seventy-one towns and villages, forty-four had never heard the words of the Gospel before, neither had the feet of the preacher trodden there. And we pray that God will bless this good seed and water it with the dew of His grace, that it may spring up in the hearts of those that heard it." And in this prayer all who await the coming of our Lord will join.

MEDICAL WORK WITHIN SIGHT OF UR OF THE CHALDEES.

DR. ARTHUR K. BENNETT.

To look at the situation of Busrah on a world-map, one would be inclined to think that the winter here must be very much like Florida or Egypt. This is not the case, however, for we have three months of tolerably cold weather. On such a cold, windy day Mr. Van Ess and I found ourselves on a steamer headed up the Tigris for a tour in the Euphrates River country. Glimpses of ice could be seen along the river banks, and we were rarely seen on deck without a heavy over-coat. Three days of stemming the current brought us to Kut ei Amara, the point where the Shatt-el-Hai breaks away from the Tigris, crossing for some sixty or seventy miles to empty into the Euphrates near Mugheir, the old site of Ur of the Chaldees.

We disembarked from the steamer into Koofas, or round, tub-shaped boats, managed by a single paddle. Soon we were lodged in the khan or village inn, as comfortably as the limited quarters of a dusty, mud-walled room of about 10 x 16 would allow. News of the coming of a hakeem (doctor) soon spread and, before we had been there half an hour, the people began to pour into the court-yard. We were not anxious to unpack our box of medicines, however, as our purpose was to push on into more virgin territory as soon as a sailboat could be obtained. Many of the cases were simple, and, as we finally were forced into a three days' stay, we treated about fifty of them, among whom was the local governor. In fact, in contrast to some previous visits, when they have troubled our colporteurs, we were very cordially received.

Our journey from here to Hai lay through a rich farming country, and it is here where much of the licorice is produced. At this time there was war between several of the tribes, and we found ourselves at times in rather exciting places. Nothing serious happened, however, although we passed by bands of Arabs fully armed, dancing and chanting their war-cry.

We stopped at Hai for three days and were busy with many visitors and patients. This place seemed to be a great trading center, for we found, on strolling through the bazaar, that the great mass of people were from the country and had come from miles around to barter their goods. A regiment of Turkish soldiers is garrisoned here, and the place is undoubtedly of enough importance to justify a long stay and a thorough canvass by the colporteur. Our treatment of the sick helped break down some of the prejudice against our work, and aggressive effort in the future ought to show results here.



DR. BENNETT AMONG THE BLACK TENTS OF KEDAR. DR. MARKED BY THE CROSS.

From Hai to Shattra we were two days on the road, stopping at two small towns to treat a few sick, for it seemed that wherever the news of our coming went abroad, there we found a big crowd anxious to see what we could do with their sick. We had been told that a certain sheikh, famous far and wide for his generosity, wished us to visit him, so we left Shattra the next day to seek his camping ground. It took us about six hours' sailing to reach the borders of his land, and then, turning up a small river, we soon saw the camp in the distance. The goat's-hair tents were not a new thing to me, yet coming thus upon a whole village of them stretching around by the score without any orderly arrangement, was really beautiful and picturesque.

Arriving there just at dusk, we were received into the sheikh's tent, which was about fifty feet long by about thirty wide, and holding a large number of people. We took our places in the circle of Arabs,

and forty pairs of eyes seemed to search through us as we drank the coffee presented. This coffee is always ready and when one has drunk it, he is entitled to the full Arab hospitality and protection. When, after five or ten minutes, the sheikh himself came, every one in the tent stood as he gave his salutation and seated himself at the head of the circle of men.

Here we were in the presence of this chief, Abu Dihn (the father of fat), as he is called, famed in verse and story, not only over this country but over all Arabia and Egypt. Could it be possible that we would ever become close friends of this man? The first time I saw him I could not but admire his stately and dignified bearing, combined with his kindness of speech to every one. Later, having become better acquainted with him, as he came to Busrah for treatment, I found that he deserves even more praises than the poets give him.

We had been sitting for about two hours, when we were invited to supper in a tent reserved for us. A young kid had been roasted and placed on a large platter of rice, around which were arranged plates of sweets and bowls of buttermilk. Our appetites had been whetted to an edge by the keen desert air, so we were able to do justice to the bountiful meal.

As is the custom for visitors, in the evening a fire was built and we sat in the circle listening until late into the night to the Arab tales of desert exploit. The next morning the sick began to come, and our small supply of medicines brought from Shattra was soon exhausted.

Nasariyeh being the end of the journey, we were anxious to reach there as soon as possible, so we left the sheikh about noon and were in Shattra by nightfall. Early next morning our caravan of twelve animals started on the weary tramp across country. For eight hours we were in the saddle and were tolerably stiff when we halted our horses in the streets of this large town.

Nasariyeh is regarded as an important center, not only for the large grain district surrounding it, but because politically it is strategic. At present there are seven Turkish regiments patrolling the place. They need a steamer line to come up the Euphrates for grain, which is now shipped away in these native river-craft. The river is very wide and shallow in places, but a little dredging would open it so that this great grain country could get a quick market for its produce. When the Bagdad railroad is completed, and I don't suppose any one knows when that will be, there is talk of a branch coming down this way to terminate either at Kuwait or Busrah.

Four days after our arrival Mr. Van Ess left for Bahrein, in view of Mr. Moerdyk's impending departure for America on furlough, and I was left alone, as was my desire, to live among the Arabs for some



TOURING ON THE EUPHRATES.

time and be able better to get from them the use of the language. I had wished that for a while the news of the hakeem's presence would not be spread abroad, so that I could have more time for study and conversation. But each day the number of patients increased, so that I was obliged to limit the clinic each morning to twenty-five, and by so doing keep things under control, in order that medical work should not hinder me from my real purpose. Not to say that I like language study better than medicine, but the success of future work depends upon the foundations laid early. Each day, for nearly three weeks, an Arab Mullah gave me lessons and from him and the many visitors who came I received great benefit in the language. For one who has not yet acquired a large vocabulary, it is not policy to enter into argument with any Moslem, especially a Mullah, since it means sure defeat, so that, although several times I had to give reasons for my faith, yet I never entered into solid argument. Oh, how many strong men we need to meet these people who are so fanatically grounded in Moslem teaching as the only truth. Indeed, we need the strongest men that our church can send, be it from the seminary or from the college; men with great human hearts, who will spend and be spent for the tearing down of the strongholds of the false prophet.

The medical work throughout the entire trip was extremely fascinating and profitable, and we hope it will not be without its future benefit to the opening of this field to aggressive evangelistic work. Four hundred and fifty-seven treatments were given and a large part of our out-station territory covered.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE.

DR. H. R. L. WORRALL.

No sabres flashed and no Cossack was stabbed by this light brigade, nobody reeled and nobody wondered. And yet, ten million years hence, when Balaklava is forgotten, this charge shall still be the paean of some redeemed Moslem, we trust.

"Let your light so shine"—this was the CHARGE of this light brigade, given by its Master to Whom be all the glory. Our brethren, the enemy, were 3,539 Moslem men who came to the Busrah dispensary in the course of eight months. One hundred and forty-seven times was the signal flashed to these stumbling, groping men, each of whom ten million years hence shall still be living on and on and on, some in bliss, we pray, and some, what? Signals such as these:

1. Jesus Christ is the One above all others to save from sin and self.
2. To Him the Quran bears witness in terms indicating His unique superiority.
3. Jesus Christ was the real and only satisfaction for sin and meets the inborn conviction of every man that "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sin.
4. Jesus Christ was more than man in that He did more than man can do.
5. Jesus Christ died and rose again for our justification.
6. Jesus Christ was and is the Great Physician of Souls as well as of bodies.
7. That our presence here is evidence of both.
8. He shall come again to judge and to rule.
9. The Christian Scriptures are not corrupted but are the true and only infallible rule of life and conduct and salvation.
10. Jesus Christ cannot and will not tolerate any rival to His claims.

* * *

A carping critic in the homeland who often dips his pen in acid, wrote from behind a comfortable desk to one of our church papers the following sentiment: "We fear our missionaries are sometimes tempted to compromise the truth and present it in forms which tend to avoid wounding the sensitive hearer. Such a policy will not make martyrs," etc.

How much compromise is contained in the foregoing ten themes, hurled, not at missionaries 10,000 miles away from behind a comfortable desk, but at fanatical Moslems under a fanatical Moslem government, judge ye!

Pray for us and help us lest we, like Tennyson's Light Brigade, "ride back."



BUSRAH PIONEERS—ESTHER AND FRED BARNY.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

DR. C. STANLEY G. MYLREA.

I suppose first impressions of a place are nearly always different from what one has anticipated. One reads a book, or an article, or sees a few photographs and, unconsciously perhaps, but none the less surely, he fills in the mental picture till he has quite a complex idea of the whole.

My information had led me to think of Bahrain principally as a great pearl center—where the bulk of the population dealt in pearls—a place which, without the pearl industry, would not exist. As a matter of fact, all of the pearl industry that I have come in contact with, after a residence in the island of some four months, is a few heaps of very evil smelling (mother-of-pearl) oyster shells. Of course, the season is only just beginning, which perhaps accounts for a good deal. Then,

again, the pearl boats go so far away that it is a case of "out of sight, out of mind," while I had pictured myself sitting on the beach watching the divers at work.

But, in truth, Bahrein does a great deal more than hunt the precious pearl. It is a distributing center of considerable importance, and as one wanders about the various custom houses and freight yards, and sees the enormous piles of merchandise stacked up, this is borne in upon one quite forcibly. The trader, at any rate, considers the trade of Arabia worth going after. God grant that more Christian people may be led to think the souls of Arabia worth going after.

It was late on a Saturday evening when we finally reached Bahrein after various wanderings. The steamer drops anchor some miles away from shore, the number of miles depending upon the size of the ship and the temerity of its skipper. From the steamer, therefore, one descends into a sailboat which takes you as close in shore as the coral reefs will allow. From this point the journey is completed on the backs of great big donkeys which, with the boys in charge, come splashing out to meet you. There is the usual haggling with donkey boys and porters, and one is free to start for home. This method of landing does very well for passengers, but it is terribly hard on freight, which gets both wet and damaged. Perhaps not the least of one's trials here is the arrival of one's goods in a more or less battered condition, with no means of redress. At this time let me sound the oft-repeated warning that packing for Bahrein cannot be too well done.

It was Sunday when we were able to view Bahrein by daylight. I had not expected to be chilly, but had a hard time keeping warm—it rained too—in Arabia! For the first fortnight it rained off and on, not very heavily perhaps, measured in inches, but amply sufficient to make everything very damp and muggy, and make you even long for a nice, warm fire. The streets of the bazaar were muddy, slimy and deserted, and none seemed anxious to do much business. Gradually, however, the rain disappeared and sunshine took its place, and now the dreaded hot weather draws nearer every day.

Some weeks ago we were informed that the rainy season was over and that there would be no more rain for many a long day. But the weather has its vagaries here as elsewhere. Last week we had a storm which, they say, is unprecedented in Bahrein. For some nights previous we had displays of lightning and an occasional dust storm, but no one expected them to come to anything much. "These storms never break over Bahrein," was the general verdict. But one night it did break over Bahrein in more senses than one. The wind blew a hurricane. Our stairs leading up to the roof were picked up bodily and hurled into the yard, windows and doors were burst in, and we had



INTERIOR OF BAHREIN BOYS' SCHOOL.

a busy time keeping the rain (which was now falling in sheets) from spoiling our rooms. Almost every ceiling was leaking like mad. Presently one of the matting verandahs collapsed, taking with it a large piece of wall, which fell over into the yard of our Arabic teacher. Luckily no one was underneath. Above the fury of the storm could be heard the wail of the unfortunate hut dwellers who had their homes wrecked. In the lulls we could hear from the Mosques the voices of the Imams calling on Allah. The rain fell for nearly an hour, but the wind, though somewhat abated in fury, kept up on and off all night. The rainfall measured half an inch, or above one-sixth of the average annual rainfall in Bahrein.

The next morning revealed a scene of wreckage everywhere. Hardly a hut was standing straight, and large numbers were absolutely ruined. Luckily, they are home-made affairs, but even then there is a certain amount of outlay for materials. The damage had not only extended to the huts—a good many walls had also collapsed. The sheikh's proud flag-staff had gone down before the storm and lay on the beach in several pieces. Inasmuch as the British flag-staff still stands, those of a superstitious turn of mind had many suggestions to

offer. Quite a number of native boats were wrecked, and some six or seven bodies were washed ashore. There was a British India steamer riding at anchor, and I am told she was instrumental in saving some twenty-five men with her lifeboats. Much anxiety was felt for the safety of the pearl fleet, but it turned out afterwards that it was out of the path of the storm.

But the storm is not the only enemy Bahrain is fighting—the plague is here, carrying off its victims to the number of 15 or 20 daily. Large numbers of Persians have deserted the island and gone to Persia, saying that if they must die, they would rather die at home. All our masons and carpenters have gone, with the result that the work on the new Mission House is at a standstill, and we probably will be unable to move in before the autumn. A great many of us have been inoculated against the plague and some of us have had sore arms, but it is well worth a little discomfort to be assured of comparative immunity for some months. Hardly a house but is mourning the loss of a member, and every one is more or less depressed and frightened. Most of the people never call a doctor and, when they do, only half carry out his instructions, complaining that the medicine is bitter or some such equally silly excuse.

Medically and spiritually, this is the day of small things, and one must not forget that only a few years ago it was hardly safe to live on this island. God will yet open the eyes of the blind. My wife and I are toiling along the dreary road to a knowledge of Arabic, but we are encouraged in that we are beginning to talk a little. Howbeit, the teacher does not allow us to become conceited, but says, "Wait until the day of examination comes."

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